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DEFENDANTS SENTENCED FOR RICO CHARGES

Baltimore, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that following the February 2003 jury convictions on federal racketeering charges, United States District Judge J. Frederick Motz sentenced today James Gross Sr., age 44, of Abingdon, Maryland to 50 years in prison followed by 5 years of supervised release for racketeering offenses, arson, witness tampering, fraud, and conspiracy to distribute cocaine and heroin. Judge Motz also sentenced today James Earl Feaster, age 44, of Baltimore, Maryland to 30 months in prison followed by 3 years of supervised release for racketeering and fraud.

The two defendants and five co-defendants were indicted in April 2002 as members of a violent racketeering enterprise led by James Gross Sr. The indictment was the result of an extensive investigation that began with the January 27, 2001 arson at Strawberry's 5000, a popular nightclub in the Rosedale section of Baltimore County that had been operated for two years by Gross Sr. and Louis Colvin. Testimony from cooperating coconspirators, including Mr. Colvin, and voluminous documentary evidence, along with evidence from various related state arrests of the defendants, established that the Gross racketeering organization engaged in an unusually varied pattern of

criminal offenses to preserve its territory and power, and financially enrich its members, including narcotics trafficking, witness tampering, attempted murders and assault, mail fraud, arson, and armed robbery. In addition to the defendants who went to trial, Louis Colvin and Michael Randolph pleaded guilty to racketeering charges, but neither has yet been sentenced.

Previously on May 16, 2003, Judge Motz sentenced co-defendant James Gross, Jr., age 26, of Baltimore, Maryland to 412 months in prison on charges of racketeering, narcotics offenses, armed robbery, attempted murder and assault in aid of racketeering, arson, fraud, and witness tampering. On the same day, Judge Motz sentenced co-defendant James Wilkes, age 34, of Baltimore, Maryland to 300 months in prison on charges of felon in possession of a firearm and assault in aid of racketeering. On June 23, 2003, Judge Motz sentenced codefendant Ronald Eddie to 262 months in prison for racketeering, arson, and conspiracy to distribute cocaine and heroin.

This case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Baltimore City and Baltimore County Fire and Police Departments. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Robert R. Harding and Christine Manuelian.